

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Original) A catalyst carrier holding member to be fitted into a gap between a catalyst carrier and a casing accommodating the catalyst carrier, said catalyst carrier holding member comprising:

a three-dimensional molded article including flexible inorganic fiber bound by a binder in a compression-deflected state,

wherein a surface in contact with the catalyst carrier is shaped substantially in conformity to an outer shape of the catalyst carrier,

wherein a surface in contact with the casing is substantially in conformity to an inner shape of the casing, and

wherein said catalyst carrier holding member has a thickness equal to or larger than the gap.

2. (Original) The catalyst carrier holding member according to Claim 1, wherein said molded article further includes an inorganic expansive admixture.

3. (Currently Amended) The catalyst carrier holding member according to Claim 1, wherein the three-dimensional molded article comprises a multilayer structure including at least two layers different in composition is provided from the surface in contact with the catalyst carrier to the surface in contact with the casing.

4. (Currently Amended) A catalyst carrier holding member to be fitted into a gap between a catalyst carrier and a casing accommodating the catalyst carrier, said catalyst carrier holding member comprising:

a three-dimensional molded article including flexible inorganic fiber bound by a binder in a compression-deflected state,

wherein a surface in contact with the catalyst carrier is shaped substantially in conformity to an outer shape of the catalyst carrier,

wherein a surface in contact with the casing is substantially in conformity to an inner shape of the casing, and

wherein said catalyst carrier holding member has a thickness equal to or larger than the gap, and

~~The catalyst carrier holding member according to claim 1,~~ wherein a composition of said catalyst carrier holding member varies continuously from the surface in contact with said catalyst carrier to the surface in contact with said casing.

5. (Original) The catalyst carrier holding member according to claim 1, wherein said binder includes an organic binder in an amount of 1 to 10 parts by weight per 100 parts by weight of said flexible inorganic fiber.

6. (Original) The catalyst carrier holding member according to claim 1, wherein said binder includes an inorganic binder in an amount of 1 to 10 parts by weight per 100 parts by weight of said flexible inorganic fiber.

7. (Original) The catalyst carrier holding member according to claim 1, wherein said binder includes an organic binder and an inorganic binder, and each of said organic binder and said inorganic binder is included in an amount of 1 to 10 parts by weight per 100 parts by weight of said flexible inorganic fiber.

8. (Original) The catalyst carrier holding member according to claim 1, wherein said flexible inorganic fiber has a fiber length of 10 mm to 100 mm.

9. (Original) The catalyst carrier holding member according to claim 1, said catalyst carrier holding member is obtained by molding with dewatering.

10. (Original) The catalyst carrier holding member according to claim 1, further comprising a slit penetrating from the surface in contact with the catalyst carrier to the surface in contact with the casing.

11. (Original) The catalyst carrier holding member according to claim 1, wherein said catalyst carrier holding member is divided into at least two parts.

12. (Withdrawn) A method for making a catalyst carrier holding member, comprising:
feeding a slurry comprising flexible inorganic fiber and a binder to a dewatering mold, the contour of which is substantially the same as one of an outer shape of a catalyst carrier and an inner shape of a casing;

dewatering the slurry to deposit a preform on the mold; and

shaping the preform into a shaped form, wherein a surface in contact with the catalyst carrier is shaped substantially in conformity to the outer shape of the catalyst carrier, and wherein a surface in contact with the casing is substantially in conformity to the inner shape of the casing, and wherein the catalyst carrier holding member has a thickness equal to or larger than a gap between the catalyst carrier and the casing accommodating the catalyst carrier.

13. (Withdrawn) The method for making a catalyst carrier holding member according to Claim 12, wherein the slurry further comprises an inorganic expansive admixture.

14. (Withdrawn) The method for making a catalyst carrier holding member according to Claim 12, wherein a plurality of slurries different in composition are used successively during feeding and dewatering the slurry to obtain the catalyst carrier holding member including a multilayer structure having two or more layers different in composition and provided from the

surface in contact with the catalyst carrier to the surface in contact with the casing.

15. (Withdrawn) The method for making a catalyst carrier holding member according to Claim 12, wherein the composition of the slurry is varied during feeding and dewatering the slurry to obtain the catalyst carrier holding member of which the composition varies continuously from the surface in contact with the catalyst carrier to the surface in contact with the casing.

16. (Original) A catalyst converter comprising a catalyst carrier holding member, wherein said catalyst carrier holding member is fitted into a gap between a catalyst carrier and a casing accommodating the catalyst carrier, and

wherein said catalyst carrier holding member comprises:

a three-dimensional molded article including flexible inorganic fiber bound by a binder in a compression-deflected state,

wherein a surface in contact with the catalyst carrier is shaped substantially in conformity to an outer shape of the catalyst carrier,

wherein a surface in contact with the casing is substantially in conformity to an inner shape of the casing, and

wherein said catalyst carrier holding member has a thickness equal to or larger than the gap.

17. (New) The catalyst converter according to Claim 16, wherein the three-dimensional molded article comprises a multilayer structure including at least two layers different in composition is provided from the surface in contact with the catalyst carrier to the surface in contact with the casing.

18. (New) The catalyst converter according to Claim 16, wherein a composition of said catalyst carrier holding member varies continuously from the surface in contact with said catalyst carrier to the surface in contact with said casing.

19. (New) The catalyst converter according to Claim 16, wherein said binder includes an organic binder in an amount of 1 to 10 parts by weight per 100 parts by weight of said flexible inorganic fiber.

20. (New) The catalyst converter according to claim 16, wherein said flexible inorganic fiber has a fiber length of 10 mm to 100 mm.